

**CLAIMS**

1. A method of upgrading firmware on a computing device comprising:  
determining a current version of firmware installed on the computing device;  
5 searching a predesignated location for a firmware upgrade;  
sending an email notification to one or more predesignated email addresses if  
the firmware upgrade is found; and  
installing the firmware upgrade onto the computing device.

10 2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the searching further  
comprises:

comparing the current version of firmware with the firmware upgrade to  
determine if the firmware upgrade will provide a more recent version of firmware.

15 3. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the searching further  
comprises initiating a browser application embedded on the computing device.

20 4. A method as recited in claim 3, wherein the browser application is  
stored on and executes on a second computing device coupled to the computing  
device.

5. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein installing the firmware  
upgrade further comprises:

25 receiving a reply from a recipient of the email notification comprising a user-  
designated time; and

at the user-designated time, downloading and installing the firmware upgrade  
onto the computing device from the predesignated location.

6. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the installing the firmware upgrade occurs automatically when the firmware upgrade is found.

5 7. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the predesignated location is a plurality of predesignated locations comprising:

a URL address accessible via the Internet; and

a local server address accessible via a local network.

10 8. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more predesignated email addresses comprise a plurality of predesignated email addresses.

9. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the email notification comprises:

15 a selectable option configured to automatically install the firmware upgrade onto the computing device; and

information comprising:

the current version of firmware;

the location of the firmware upgrade;

20 the cost associated with the firmware upgrade; and

billing data required to complete an electronic commerce transaction to purchase the firmware upgrade.

25 10. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the computing device is embodied as a device selected from a group of devices comprising:

a printer;

a scanner;

a copier;  
a facsimile machine;  
a multifunction peripheral device;  
a modem;  
5 a cellular telephone;  
a personal computer; and  
a personal digital assistant (PDA).

10 11. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the firmware is device driver software and the firmware upgrade is a device driver upgrade.

12. A computer-readable medium comprising computer executable instructions configured to cause a computer to perform the method of claim 1.

15 13. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 12, wherein the computer executable instructions are further configured to cause a computer to perform the method of claim 1 automatically on a periodic basis.

20 14. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 12, wherein the computer executable instructions are further configured to cause a computer to perform the method of claim 1 at the request of a user.

25 15. A method of upgrading firmware on a computing device comprising:  
predesignating a server location to be searched for a firmware upgrade;  
predesignating an email address to which an email notification will be sent  
when the firmware upgrade is found;

receiving an email notification at the email address, the email notification comprising a selectable option configured to automatically install the firmware upgrade on the computing device from the server location.

5           16.    A method as recited in claim 15, further comprising:  
in response to a selection of the selectable option, requesting a time at which  
the firmware upgrade will be automatically installed.

10           17.    A method as recited in claim 15, further comprising:  
in response to a selection of the selectable option, requesting billing data  
required to complete an electronic commerce transaction to purchase the firmware  
upgrade.

15           18.    A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the predesignating a server  
location comprises:  
configuring an applet on the computing device with an address location on the  
server.

20           19.    A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the predesignating an email  
address comprises:  
configuring an applet on the computing device with an email address for  
receiving an email notification.

25           20.    A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the firmware is device driver  
software and the firmware upgrade is a device driver upgrade.

21. A computing device comprising:

firmware stored in nonvolatile memory on the computing device; and

an upgrade applet configured to determine the current version of the firmware,  
search a predesignated location for a firmware upgrade, send an email notification  
5 regarding an available firmware upgrade, and install the available firmware upgrade  
in the nonvolatile memory.

22. A computing device as recited in claim 21, wherein the email  
notification comprises:

10 a selectable option to have the available firmware upgrade installed at a user-  
designated time; and

information comprising:

the current version of the firmware; and

the location of the available firmware upgrade.

23. A computing device as recited in claim 22, wherein the email  
notification further comprises:

information comprising:

a cost associated with the available firmware upgrade; and

20 billing data required to complete an electronic commerce transaction to  
purchase the available firmware upgrade;

and wherein the selectable option comprises:

a second applet configured to browse to the predesignated location and  
install the available firmware upgrade upon completion of the electronic commerce  
25 transaction.

24. A computing device as recited in claim 21 embodied as a device selected from a group of devices comprising:

a printer;

a scanner;

5 a copier;

a facsimile machine;

a multifunction peripheral device;

a modem;

a cellular telephone;

10 a personal computer; and

a personal digital assistant (PDA).

25. A computing device as recited in claim 21, wherein the nonvolatile memory comprises electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM).

26. A system for upgrading firmware comprising:

a computing device having an upgrade applet configured to locate a firmware upgrade and send an email notification regarding the firmware upgrade; and

20 an email recipient configured to reply to the email notification, the reply comprising a user-designated time at which the upgrade applet will install the firmware upgrade onto the computing device.